

than it is today. As great as it is, as just as it is, it can be better, if we realize that we must have it as a Nation with justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving us this time to commemorate an extraordinary experience in the lives of each one of us.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. I honor and thank my brother, JOHN LEWIS; and I thank my friend, Doug Tanner.

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today I join a number of my colleagues in commemorating the 35th anniversary of the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery. I was honored to be a part of the Faith and Politics Institute's Congressional Civil Rights pilgrimage a couple of weeks ago. It was powerful to hear from those who had experienced the struggle firsthand. It was informative to learn about these historic events while actually at the sites. It was inspiring to walk in the same places as those who stood up for justice.

Thirty-five years ago, our country experienced some of the lowest and highest points in our history. On the one hand, law enforcement agents and elected officials violently opposed the basic democratic right of voting for African Americans. On the other hand, ministers, students and regular citizens stood up for their most basic rights as Americans. Congress responded by passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the crowning achievements of the Civil Rights Movement.

Unfortunately, the work of Martin Luther King and JOHN LEWIS and so many others is still unfinished. We have made many strides toward equal rights and progress toward racial equality. But the issues surrounding race remain among the biggest challenges facing our country. When we review our country's legacy around slavery, the historical record is still incomplete.

One of the items on that unfinished agenda is that the U.S. government has never apologized for its role in slavery. A few years ago, I saw a television program with a Black minister and a White minister commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. They stated that there had never been an official apology for slavery. With my country's Civil War, all that President Abraham Lincoln achieved and the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, I found that hard to believe.

So I went to the Library of Congress and discovered that they were right—no one in the Government of the United States had ever apologized for slavery. Therefore, I set out to correct this glaring omission in history. On June 12, 1997, I introduced my simple resolution without any fanfare.

What happened next was a complete surprise. It exploded on the political

scene at about the same time President Clinton was conducting his "National Dialogue on Race." Both conservatives and liberals, blacks and whites dismissed it as "a meaningless gesture" or "an avoidance of problem-solving." After considering it, President Clinton decided not to apologize because of the fear of legal ramifications.

I received hundreds of letters and phone calls about the apology. Most of the people I heard from opposed the idea and some were blatantly racist and hateful. Very few people stood up and defended the idea and necessity of an apology. At times, I felt very alone in this struggle to do what I know is right.

I know that my resolution will not fix the lingering injustice resulting from slavery. But reconciliation begins with an apology. I hope this apology will be the start of a new healing between the races. I introduced the resolution because it is the right thing to do.

Many of the opponents to the apology argued that slavery had been abolished over a century ago and no one alive in the United States today had been a slave or a slave owner. But that ignores the fact that slavery's effects are still with us.

Just one of the many examples of slavery's legacy is in terms of assets. Slaves, of course, were not able to earn any money or pass on an inheritance to their children. When African-Americans were freed after the Civil War, they started at a distinct disadvantage. Then they were shackled with Jim Crow laws and segregation that prevented them from truly entering into society. Only within the last two generations have descendants of slaves legally able to join American society. Not only was it not a level playing field, the game itself was stacked against people of color.

Now in the 21st Century in the richest nation in the world, blacks control only 1.3 percent of the nation's financial assets, while they are around 12 percent of the population. Whites possess a staggering 95 percent. Almost two-thirds of black households have no net financial assets. Blacks and whites with equal incomes possess very unequal shares of wealth.

Our work is obviously not finished. I am proud to stand up with my colleagues and voice my support for efforts that promote racial reconciliation. My special thanks to JOHN LEWIS and AMO HOUGHTON for organizing the pilgrimage to Alabama and the ongoing "Congressional Conversations on Race." I look forward a time when the record is corrected and we can truly celebrate the accomplishments that have brought about "One America."

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the special order just given.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELDON of Florida). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

NIGHTSIDE CHAT ON TOPICS OF CONCERN TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, once again we are here this evening for a little nightside chat. There are a number of different subjects I would like to cover this evening.

I would like to start out by talking about the loss of a good friend that I had last week, just a short comment in that regard. We are going to move on and talk about the Congressional Medal of Honor. We lost one of our heroes. If you want a true definition of hero, take a look at the people that serve in our military forces. We lost one in Colorado. I will talk a little about him. Then I want to move on and talk about the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms people.

We had a very interesting item in Colorado over the weekend about the enforcement, or lack of enforcement, by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms department in their inspections regarding firearms sales. As you know, across the country guns have become somewhat of a sensitive issue.

Now, last week when I addressed you, we talked a little on Operation Exile. I know that my colleague, the gentleman from the State of Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM), is going to introduce a bill tomorrow to assist our local States and our local communities on their Project Exile, so we will highlight a little of what he is attempting to do. We will talk about our public awareness campaign and talk about some of the responsibilities of gun ownership.

Then, if we have some time this evening, I would like to touch again on the death tax. As many of you know, that is a very punitive tax in our system. It is a tax that has devastating impacts on small businesses, has devastating impacts on farms and ranches across the country; and, frankly, this is not a justified tax.

It is a tax supported by the administration. In fact, the administration has proposed a \$9.5 billion increase in the death tax this year. I am confident that we can stop that. But just so you no, there is a big difference of opinion on the policy of the Democratic administration to raise death taxes and our position on the Republican side that says death taxes are fundamentally unfair, they are unjustified, and they should be eliminated in this country.